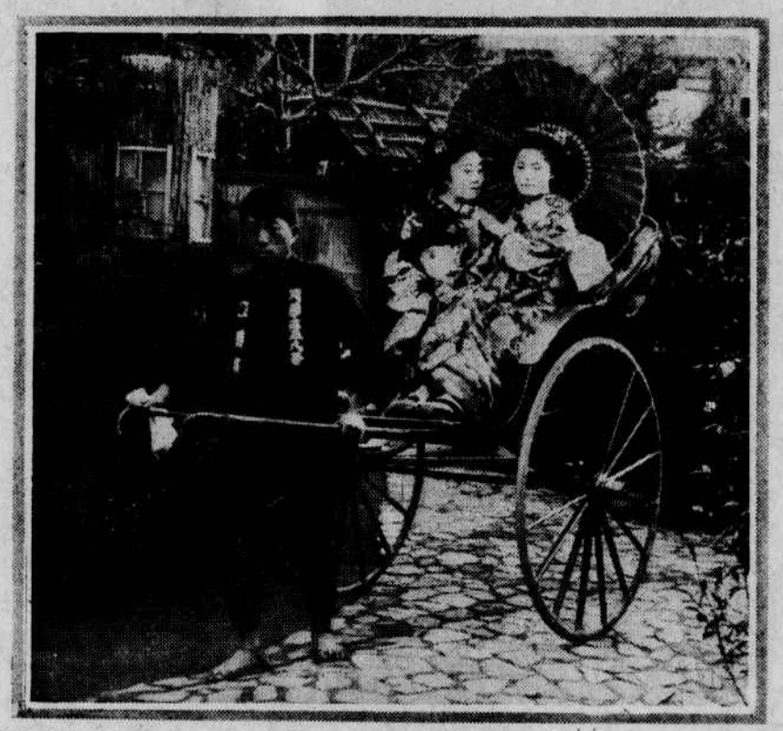
JAPANESE CHARACTER REVEALED IN PEN PICTURES

Charming Manners the Rule Among Cultured Classes—Tendency Toward Suicide Common to All—Vanity Expressed in General Wearing of Crests—Many Occidental Inventions Adopted, Notably Automobiles

Sacred Mountain, Fujiyama, of Rare Beauty—Blond Hair Creates a Riot—Fish Always in Order, but Corn on Cob Also Favorite — Police of Japan Poorest Paid in World — Great Business Enterprises Real Monopolies

Japan's transport facilities are varied, as the accompanying pictures show. The motor car is becoming popular with the rich, but hand drawn vehicles are far more freely used. The pictured automobile was made in America for the Mikado and cost $25,000. The man with the loaded push cart is a public porter. Below is the familiar rickshaw.



HOW the Japanese character has changed little since feudal days is revealed in the accompanying pen pictures by Louis Seibold, The New York Herald correspondent, whose recent articles on Japan have attracted nationwide attention. Many Occidental inventions have been freely adopted, but thought and manners remain much the same. Not the least interesting feature of Mr. Seibold's observations is his comment on the tendency toward suicide that exists among all classes and the general desire to display family crests.

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WESTERNERS who encounter for the first time the excessive politeness of the Japanese are likely to describe one of the favorable outdoor and indoor sports as "bowing and scraping." No other people in the world indulge in such excessive politeness as the Japanese. When they meet their meeting takes the form of holding their arms straight down abjectly at the sides and almost doubling themselves into the form of a jackknife. One of the extraordinary things about it is they do not crack their heads together. As a matter of fact they only miss doing so by a matter of inches. When they take leave of each other there is no waste of words about it—they just double up three times and turn unceremoniously away. The practice is not confined to any class or caste—the coolie and the ricksha "folk" are quite as punctilious in observing the ancient form as the aristocrat who traces his lineage back a couple of thousand years.

At a little town on the Inland Sea I witnessed the going away of a bride and groom. Half a hundred of their relatives came down to the train to see them off. The bride and groom, very solemn of mien, stood in the vestibule of their car for more than five minutes without saying a word to their friends outside, or even as much as smiling at them. Nobody dug up an old shoe or handful of rice, and nobody said a word until the train started off, then the bride and groom bowed deeply three times each and their friends on the station platform did the same.

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THE well to do Japanese has acquired the gentle art of loafing with great ease. He has fallen into the English habit of "week ending" and of further maintaining country places at the seashore or in the mountains. As Japan is entirely surrounded by water and other islands there is no lack of resorts. At some of these wealthy Japanese have built bungalows with modern conveniences, and spend two or three months in them while the cities are sweltering in the deadly heat that grips the lowlands for three months without abate. The most popular resorts are at Kamakura and Enoshimo, on the Pacific side of the main island; at beautiful Nikko, on the slopes of Fuji Mountain; at Hakone, at Mianosta, all of which are mountain resorts, and at Karuizawa, where the missionaries from all over the Orient gather to spend the heated spell and which to some extent resembles an American camp meeting.

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THE Japanese are pretty well accustomed to Westerners by this time, and rarely bestow a second look upon the representatives of those races. But there is one Occidental type that never fails to provoke interest that is sometimes embarrassing. This is a woman with blond hair, as a blond, auburn or brown haired Japanese is as rare as the sacred auk.

In a little town west of Yokohama a short time ago a very pretty American girl with hair like spun gold held up traffic for ten minutes while the populace gathered around and focused attention upon her hair, on which lightly rested a small sailor hat. The young lady was very much embarrassed until rescued by a guard. She would probably have been much more disconcerted if she could have understood the comments of her audience. The consensus of feminine opinion was that her hair had been dyed.

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THE Japanese is a natural squatter. Except when he or she is dining in a hotel or restaurant the most natural posture is to tilt their legs and squat upon their heels, gathering the kimono in one hand so as to prevent it from dragging in the mud or dust. When a Japanese man or woman —or child, for that matter—is waiting for a tramcar, or wants to indulge in a tete-a-tete, he or she just squats down, and can maintain a position that would be decidedly uncomfortable to a Westerner. Of course the better grade of Japanese do not squat in the streets, but the "lower classes," young and old, fall naturally into the habit.

I have seen some men and women of 70 resting on their heels for a full half hour without a break. Inasmuch as few Japanese ever get fat, it struck me that the squatting habit would be a good one to introduce in America. A foreigner, by the way, is likely to find the chairs of a Japanese house rather inconvenient. They are a couple of inches lower than the Western models, because the Japanese on an average are not much over 5 feet 3 inches for the men and two or three inches shorter as to women.

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OF course the cultured Japanese possess as charming and correct table manners as any people in the world, but a foreigner is likely to experience an unpleasant sensation in a mixed gathering of Japanese at table. Table etiquette in the Flowery Kingdom does not discountenance audible manifestations of gustatory pleasure. The old gag that Frank Bush used to spring about going to a banquet to "hear" the guests eat soup was probably inspired by a visit to Japan. It seems to be the theory of the ordinary Japanese that he can best instance his enjoyment of the meal by making as much noise as possible, by smacking his lips, sucking his teeth and belching between courses. Incidentally, toothpicks are used somewhat for ornaments, or as plumbing devices, ostentatiously manipulated.

Vegetable diets are not always conducive to happiness, though the Japanese as a rule eat very little meat, particularly those of the Buddhist faith. A statistician has figured out that a diet of vegetables, fish and rice induces a pessimistic view of life and leads many persons to suicide. In proof of his assertion he cites the case of ten Buddhists, five of whom were women, who cast themselves into the ocean without any explanation. He thinks that if they had eaten some meat they wouldn't have done so.

The popular view that the Japanese exist entirely upon rice and fish is somewhat erroneous. They are very fond of starchy foods, go in for corn on the cob, squash, potatoes, noodles—which takes the place of the Coney Island "hot dog"—and have a very sweet tooth, indeed. But fish is always in order. Probably one-tenth of the population in the islands of the Japanese archipelago are engaged in catching, curing and drying fish for the other nine-tenths. The dried fish is cut up into filets and stacked up in the provision shops like kindling wood, the price of it being painted in white on the fish itself. The Japanese like an "American meal" for a change, and the hotels and restaurants in the large cities are favorite places for them to dine out.

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FUJIYAMA (Mount Fuji) is one of the few bits of natural scenery that eclipses in splendor the pictures of it. It is one of the most impressive spectacles that ever met the human eye, and there is little wonder that the Japanese star it as their most valued possession. Seen in the early morning, rising above the clouds that obscure two-thirds of its majestic grandeur, it fixes itself indelibly in the mind. Silhouetted against a sky of orange, azure and sepia, its noble crest, crowned with snow even in September, invites adoration until the clouds have drifted upward and hidden it from sight. It is only natural that it should be the most popular shrine in the Far East, to which people of all religious dogmas come to worship. The most eloquent tribute to its beauty is rendered in these lines from the pen of a Japanese poet little known:

"I turn my face to the lofty Fuji
Queenliest queen of the world below,
Crowned with a crown of pure white lilies
Flowers of the winter's frost and snow.
The stars and the clouds are in her secret.
And her beauty shines on the wondering sea,
But not on me."

The crest of Fujiyama is the magnet that draws many thousands of ambitious hikers during the "good weather," for the tip of it rises 13,000 feet in the air and is at times not only uncomfortable but unsafe. A journey to the top consumes the best part of five hours steady climbing up a passably good footpath and is by no means easy walking. Sometimes storms overtake the hikers and the Government guides are compelled to rescue persons who remain too long at the top. Recently four persons were frozen to death on the top of Fuji, which also provides a favorite theatre for suicides. Most of these heart weary are the victims of unrequited love and select Fuji to impress the fickle one with the enormity of his (or her) inhumanity.

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IN travelling about the country you are not compelled to ask guard or fellow passenger the name of a railroad station. It is conspicuously printed in both English and Japanese, supplemented with rather more comprehensive information than is provided by the railroads of other countries. For instance, each station sign tells you in English "the points of interest" to be reached from there, the names and location of the famous Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, the unusual natural attractions in the surrounding mountains, and you can always find a Japanese man or woman among the passengers who is ever ready to describe to you the beauties of the land.

A good way to see the interior of Japan is from a car window as the train flashes through the valleys or follows the contour of the Inland Sea. The outstanding impression that one obtains is that life in the smaller communities is divided between working in the fields, fishing in the sea and swimming in the creeks. When working in the fields the Japanese men and women wear a minimum of clothing, the most conspicuous features being a mammoth mushroom hat and a straw mat, which protects their bodies from the blaze of the sun. As they lean over to tenderly care for their precious crops of rice or garden truck they look like nothing so much as giant tortoises to the casual eye. The women appear to do most of the work in the field, sometimes with their babies hitched to their backs, said baby either blissfully sleeping or vociferously demanding nourishment.

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THE tram service in the larger towns like Tokio is supplemented by a motor jitney service. A street car ride costs about 3½ cents. Tokio has an elevated railroad line for the steam cars and electric service to Yokohama, which is twenty miles away. The steam railroad is equipped with modern American engines and a mixture of Continental and American passenger and sleeping cars. Railroad fare, fixed by the Government, approximates about two-thirds of the rates prevailing in the United States.

All through passenger trains carry dining cars, in which both table d'hote and a la carte service is maintained. But most of the travelling Japanese carry their food supplies with them, put up in little cedar boxes and including the inevitable chopsticks. In the dining cars knives and forks are provided, and the menus and service are a good deal like those in American or Continental restaurant cars. The tariff is about the same.

A few minutes before meal hours the porters on the trains distribute little strips to passengers, printed in both Japanese and English, and reading, "Dinner is now ready." If you don't care to go into the dining car you can have your meal served in your compartment.

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THE motor car is coming into popular favor among prosperous Japanese, but it is almost entirely confined to the cities, and even the Ford is little known in the country districts. There are, however, a great many of the more expensive American cars in Tokio, Yokohama, Osake, Kobe and other large cities. That a motor is a costly luxury is shown by the fact that gasolene costs 75 cents a gallon. A good chauffeur can be had, however, for from $5 to $10 a week.

A motor costs about twice as much in Japan as it does in the States, because of freight charges and a duty of 30 per cent. A Ford costs 2,200 yen, or about $1,100, delivered to a Japanese purchaser. The roads of Japan, as a rule, are not suitable for motoring, although the Government has recently entered upon improvement of them. The Japanese have made two or three attempts to produce motors, but the results have not been satisfactory. Figures show that there are roundly 35,000 passenger motors in the country and 8,000 trucks.

Tokio, Yokohama, Osake and Kobe are going in for skyscrapers. Several American firms, including the G. A. Fuller Company of New York, are engaged in putting up modern office buildings at the Japanese capital and at Kobe. Buildings are of steel and concrete, and are quite as substantial and attractive as those in any American city except in the matter of height. Eight stories is the limit of buildings in Tokio, it being the purpose of the Government to standardize the modern city.

The plans for beautifying Tokio call for the ultimate remaking of the central part of the town facing the Marunouchi Kojimachi, where the royal palaces are grouped behind grim, gray walls that hide them from sight. Tokio is just getting used to the new style of Western architecture, which is not at all surprising in view of the fact that probably 2,400,000 of the 2,500,000 population are packed away in little one or two story houses in narrow streets.

Elaborate plans for new hotels, constructed according to Japanese architectural design, are also under way. The New Imperial Hotel, which has been three years in building, is partly owned by the royal family. It is two stories in height, more than 700 feet long and revives the ancient glories of the Satsuma period, although it is to be replete with modern conveniences.

The great business enterprises of Japan, which are virtual monopolies, developed to a remarkable degree during the war. Some of them, like the Mitsui family group, the Mitsubishi, the Kasawara, the Koshi, the Mitsukoshi and the Shibusawa, employ many thousands of people. The Mitsubishi enterprise alone probably has an office force of 5,000, which are to be housed in three of the most impressive "skyscrapers" in Tokio. The Mitsukoshi department store in the Ginza is one of the show places of Tokio. A life insurance company building on the same thoroughfare has a roof garden and a restaurant, to which most visitors are taken for a view of the town. The tower is about ten stories above the street.

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ALTHOUGH everybody in Japan cannot wear a decoration, every man above the coolie, or common laborer, has a crest. A great many of the Japanese take pride in wearing this crest as conspicuously as possible, usually on the haori, or black silk coat. Almost every Japanese who is of social distinction possesses at least one haori with crest. Sometimes a Japanese whose ancestry runs back several hundred years wears five crests at the same time. These are worked out in white embroidery, one at the back of the neck, one on each shoulder and one on the front of each sleeve.

The O-mon, or crests for women, are worn in the same positions as those on the coats of the men. A woman may wear a haori showing a crest in private, but it would be considered a breach of etiquette for her to wear one at a formal function. Men are, however, privileged to wear them on the latter occasions. Many families have hereditary crests, and some families have two distinct designs. The imperial family uses two — the sixteen petalled chrysanthemum and the paulownia. It is illegal for any person not a member of the royal family to use these devices under any circumstances.

Not only the clothing worn by the owners of crests are adorned with the family insignia, but their travelling cases, lunch boxes, sword racks, tea caddies and writing boxes are similarly marked. Members of the old families who have gone into trade have given great offence to some of the aristocrats by putting their crests on the backs of their employees along with an advertisement of their business, although the display of the family crest on retainers and servants was discarded along with the feudal system when the empire was restored in 1868.

The original conception of the O'mon was a representation of the sun. Devices intended to indicate different families and even to commemorate historic events were embroidered inside of this disk. Gradually there grew up a system of heraldry, which has survived to some extent. The abolition of feudalism gave each person in the country above the status of coolie a right to wear a crest if he chose, and most of them chose to do so.

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THE police system of Japan pretty closely parallels the military organization. The policemen in the cities are trained for military purposes, wear a white military uniform (in summer) and carry a sword instead of a "billy" or baton. They are probably the poorest paid policemen in the world, receiving on an average 30 yen a month, or about $15. The Chief of Police of Tokio gets $750 a year. As a rule the force is organized on a very high plane, although a certain amount of "squeeze" (honest graft) goes with the job.

While the police establishments are under local control they are really a part of the military machine of the empire. The city police are polite and helpful to strangers and severe in handling native malcontents, as the burden of proof is usually upon the offender and not upon the law. Two years ago the courts, which exercise both civil and criminal jurisdiction, tried 478,932 cases for various offences. Capital punishment (electricity) is rarely inflicted, being imposed on burglars, incendiaries, manufacturers of explosives and murderers.

The Government maintains a reform school system for offenders under 18 where both moral instruction and general education is provided. There is a surprising number of suicides, and not infrequently cases of hara-kari reported by the police, the ancient method of disemboweling being employed by adherents of the clans that flourished and wielded great power in the days of the Shoguns.

Four cases of hara-kari—all men above 60—were reported by the police of Tokio during a mid-August week. In every instance the victim observed the form prescribed by ancient tradition, faced a picture of the Emperor, invoked the protection of his Shinto (or Buddhist) gods and used two short swords in seeking an escape from human misery.

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SUICIDE has always been one of the principal indoor sports of Japan. To the Western mind most of the causes that inspire a desire to shuffle off are trivial, but to the Japanese mind they are fundamental. A domestic row, a "blue" day, the ambition to make somebody sorry for your death, serve as an excuse for committing hara-kari, which is messy and painful, or jumping into the water, which is the most popular method. During August there were a great many suicides in the Tokio district. A majority of the suicides were young girls.

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WHILE Japan is very shy in the matter of mammals, it shelters a multitude of winged things. Not the least penetrating of these is the Japanese mosquito, which, while not as brawny as the Jersey type, insists on being both heard and felt. You can hear a Japanese mosquito coming six or seven feet away. The most effective way of sidetracking him is to light a curlycue of Chinese punk and set it on a tabaret alongside of your bed. When you first try this universal antidote it seems to be more disagreeable than the strike of the mosquito, but after a while you get so used to it that when the room-boy fails to provide it you get up in the middle of the night to insist upon having your punk.

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THE popular sport of small boys and girls in the parks of the cities and in the rural districts is chasing butterflies and insects with a fishing pole, the end of which is smeared with a glue like substance upon which the winged quarry lights and is ensnared. Most of the small boys and girls of Japan know of mammals only in the picture books. There are no rabbits or pigeons to chase, so they are compelled to chase butterflies.

The little Japanese are not as ruthless as juvenile Westerners, because they are taught to be very gentle with all living things. During the month of August they are industriously engaged in snaring insects, for a peculiar festival is held every September with impressive ceremonies intended to teach a moral. This festival is known as "freeing the winged things" and dates back several hundred years. All of the butterflies and insects caught during August are turned loose on the festival day and the juvenile Japanese impressed with the fact that they must never wantonly imprison beasts or birds.

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THE Japanese are natural born gamblers. Most of them will bet on anything. Yet public gambling is not countenanced. Card games are not popular, and there are neither lotteries nor policy game, and betting on horse racing is illegal. In the sake shops and tea houses the most popular game is "go," which is played somewhat after the manner of checkers or chess, and there is a game that seems to combine some of the features of both fantan and craps. There are some very famous chess players in Japan, and tournaments between them are very popular.

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ALTHOUGH a blend of Malay and Mongol, the Japanese have for centuries striven to keep the original strain clear. They do not encourage marriages between their own people and foreigners, and while many such occur, the national prejudice against them is very strong. Some of the most successful business men in the empire, and certainly the most attractive women, are Eurasians, the results of mating between Japanese and Europeans and Americans.

The female species of this fusion of bloods seem to retain the more admirable qualities of both—something of the chic of the Frenchwoman, the poise of the English and the independence of the American. Marriages between the Japanese and Chinese are extremely rare, as the two races do not assimilate, despite the fact that there are large colonies of Chinese in all of the large towns. Marriages between Americans and Japanese "turn out as well as could be expected," according to an authority. Most of them are between American men and Japanese women. There are, of course, many "trial marriages," generally temporary.

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THE Japanese merchant makes a heroic attempt to keep abreast of his Western rival by advertising his goods. There is scarcely a town but boasts of at least one sign done in liberal English, while in the larger centres "ads" in that language are frequent. One in Tokio reads: "Ladies are dressed here." Another, in Kobe, informs you that a tailor is "hight class." One at Nagasaki publishes the wares of a "sprenderd bakary," the "l" being silent in Japanese. An American sign painter who works up and down the China Sea makes a very good living by correcting inaccuracies due to phonetic influences.